

In the Claims

1-10 (cancelled)

11. (new) A filter element for filtering fluids, comprising:

outer, middle and inner filter units arranged concentrically about a longitudinal axis;

outer, middle and inner support elements arranged concentrically about said longitudinal axis and disposed in an alternating succession with said filter units, said outer, middle and inner support elements supporting and partially engaging said outer, middle and inner filter units, respectively, in directions of fluid streams therethrough;

fluid receiving channels on a side of each of said middle and outer support elements facing the respective filter units, said channels being bordered laterally by longitudinal ribs on said support elements, extending along spiral tracks on said outer and middle support elements and having two free ends emerging on opposing ends of said middle and outer support elements, said channels extend continuously without repeated deflections of fluid streams therein and only partially encompassing the respective support elements forming a twisted guide for fluid flow; and

conduits convey fluid to be filtered from outside said outer and inner filter units to inner clean sides thereof and from one side of said middle filter unit to an opposite clean side thereof.

12. (new) A filter element according to claim 11 wherein

each of said support element is formed from a support tube.

13. (new) A filter element according to claim 12 wherein
said channels are on both inner and outer peripheral sides of said outer and middle
support elements.
14. (new) A filter element according to claim 13 wherein
said longitudinal ribs are formed as crosspieces on said support tubes.
15. (new) A filter element according to claim 13 wherein
directly adjacent ones of said longitudinal ribs are connected in pairs on said outer
peripheral sides to form support surfaces and on said inner peripheral sides to form bases of
grooves of said channels.
16. (new) A filter element according to claim 13 wherein
said inner support element has passages forming a channel guide for fluid flow.
17. (new) A filter element according to claim 11 wherein
each said filter unit comprises a cylindrical mat of essentially equal linear dimensions in
directions parallel to said longitudinal axis.
18. (new) A filter element according to claim 11 wherein
at least one of said outer and middle support elements has at least 20 of said channels
forming a common fluid guide.

19. (new) A filter element according to claim 18 wherein
said channels are tilted at an angle between 10° and 30° relative to a line parallel to said longitudinal axis.
20. (new) A filter element according to claim 19 wherein
said angle is 15° .
21. (new) A filter element according to claim 11 wherein
said outer and middle support elements prevent fluid flow therethrough, limiting flow along surfaces thereof.